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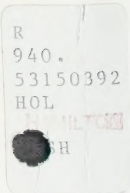
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# *Holocaust Recollections*

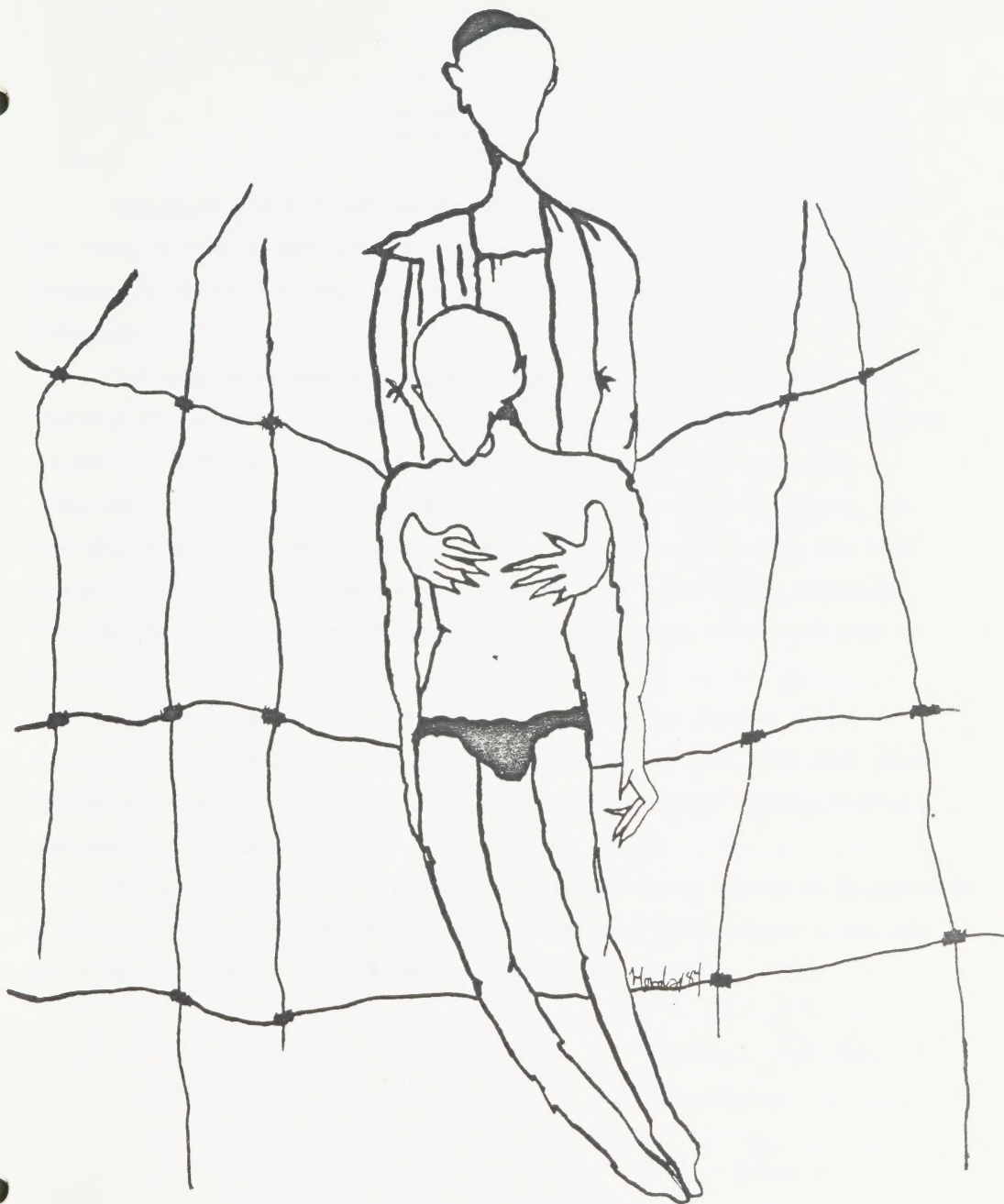
*the stories of ten Hamiltonians who survived*

*Compiled by Sonia Halpern & Jack Joseph*

*Sponsored by Carol Krames, Director of Hamilton Jewish Social Services*

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Artwork by Monda Halpern, inspired by George Wallace's sculpture entitled "Hope from Tragedy" (1967) which commemorates the slaughter of six million Jews. Original is in the Hamilton Jewish Community Centre.

This project was made possible, by a grant from the Federal Government.



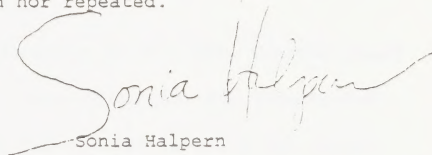
FOREWARD  
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During the course of working for Jewish Social Services of Hamilton, in the summer of 1984, we were asked to conduct a series of interviews with Holocaust survivors in the Hamilton area. We took on the project with much interest and enthusiasm.

Our undertaking began when we were given a list of some of the Holocaust survivors in the area. Our objective was to interview ten survivors. In approaching a total of 23 individuals, we first telephoned them to acquaint them with our intentions. At this point, three people immediately declined to participate. The remainder of the people were telephoned a second time, approximately one week later in order to set up an appointment for an interview. Seven individuals refused at this time and three people were indecisive about speaking with us, refused after a third call.

All ten survivors who agreed to participate were very generous with their information. Each interview lasted approximately one and one half hours after which each story was written up formally, typed and then taken back its conveyer a short time later for approval.

The survivors' reason for relaying their experiences is similar to the objective of this project: to make public their invaluable stories in the desperate hope that the atrocities of World War II neither be forgotten nor repeated.

  
Sonia Halpern



Jack Joseph





RENA FREEMAN  
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Rena Freeman is a courageous woman who strongly believes in keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive. Her experiences are haunting, yet her willingness to relay them overrides her pain.

Mrs. Rena Freeman was born Rena Kilman, in 1914 in Siedlce, Poland. In 1939 she married Mosze Freeman, a young man whose family operated its own leather business in the industrial town of Wierzbnik.

September 1939 brought with it the invasion of Poland and thus the start of World War II. Mrs. Freeman recollects how Hitler's hatred of the Jews brought deep-rooted anti-semitic feelings in Poland to the surface. She feels this was the reason that Poland became a primary location for the establishment of many concentration camps and crematoria. Mrs. Freeman became aware of the life-threatening situation that was existing for Jews. She confronted the predicament with the attitude expressed in her words "Somehow I'll fight."

In 1939, Mrs. Freeman became pregnant with her first child. She and her husband wished to flee Wierzbnik at this time as it was being heavily bombed. The bombing was strategic in that the Germans wanted to eliminate the townspeople yet keep the thriving steel industry intact. Due to Mrs. Freeman's pregnancy, however she and Mosze only went as far as the countryside and soon returned to Wierzbnik. She then joined the Air Defence for Private Citizens to aid in transporting civilians to bombshelters. The bombing became more intense so she and her family went to the countryside to avoid the heavy bomb raids of the town.

The whole family eventually went back to Wierzbnik so that Mrs. Freeman could give birth in the family home. Upon their return, they found that the Germans had become well established in the town and that they had started creating the Jewish ghettos. The ghettos functioned as areas in which all Jews were under the rigid control of the German S.S.

Despite the turmoil occurring at the time, Mrs. Freeman gave birth to a healthy girl on December 31, 1939, whom she name Etta.

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When Etta was two and one half years of age, Mrs. Freeman, feeling it was the only way she could save her daughter's life, gave Etta away to Christian neighbours. At this time Jewish homes were being evacuated and the ghettos were expanding. Day and night, some Jews were sent to their death by way of freight trains destined for concentration camps while others were treated like slaves within the town. Fortunately, the labour force still existed there so that Mr. & Mrs. Freeman and her brother-in-law, Abraham, could still hold on to their jobs in a lumber yard where they were supplied with some food and barracks. They realized however, that it was only a matter of time before they too would be sent away.

Eventually the whole town of Wierzbniak was surrounded by the Germans. According to Mrs. Freeman, all of the town's Jews were put on trains destined for death camps. The soldiers, preoccupied with the organizational procedures of loading the trains, neglected to witness the escape of the Freemans and six others. They climbed over high fences and ran through fields. Mrs. Freeman still shows deep markings on her legs caused by the sharp fence which injured her over forty-years ago.

She remembers hearing the gunfire aimed her way which hit those running behind her. In hope of aiding them, she tore some material from her dress to help stop the bleeding; the attempts were futile.

At nightfall, Mrs. Freeman, her husband and Abraham stopped in some wooded area to make further plans. They knew the area well, however, the danger of staying in one location for a long period of time was too great. Fearing German confrontation, they ventured to a small village called Pokrzywnica where a cobbler temporarily aided the Freemans by hiding the two brothers in his attic.

Mrs. Freeman was their only link to the outside world. Because of her ability to speak fluent Polish, she successfully passed as a Polish peasant. She still feels that her perfect Polish (her mother tongue) was the greatest contribution to her survival. Wearing her peasant clothing, she often walked 15 kilometres a day from Pokrzywnica to Wierzbniak to obtain leather hidden in the Freeman's store. She

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exchanged leather in order to attain bread for her family. Mrs. Freeman was aware of the extreme danger in travelling from town to town, yet her determination to keep her family alive overshadowed the risk.

When it appeared as though Mr. Freeman and his brother were out of immediate danger while hiding in the cobbler's attic, she decided that it was time to be reunited with her daughter, Etta. Mrs. Freeman went back to Wierzbnik where a photographer friend and her husband helped her in obtaining a false passport.

In the summer of 1944, Mrs. Freeman left her husband and her brother-in-law in order to retrieve her daughter. Though the risks were enormous, she took the train to Wieliczka, a small salt-mine town near Krakow where Etta had been living. Mrs. Freeman was finally reunited with her daughter at a central train stop in Skarzysko. The woman who took care of Etta invited Mrs. Freeman to accompany them back to her home in Wieliczka where she could live with Etta, however, Mrs. Freeman decided that it would be best if she travelled alone. She wanted to avoid being seen with her daughter in the city, for the danger was too great.

Before boarding the next train that would permanently reunite her with her daughter, Mrs. Freeman was recognized by a young Polish woman from her home town of Wierzbnik. Mrs. Freeman remembers feeling more frightened of this young woman and the possibility of revealing Mrs. Freeman's true identity as a Jew than she was of the numerous German soldiers that occupied the train on which she travelled.

Nevertheless, she later met with Etta and her "protector" and stayed with them in Wieliczka for approximately six months. During this time she had no knowledge of the Freeman brothers' welfare as they knew nothing of hers and Etta's.

The Christmas season was approaching and there was news of the oncoming clash between the Russians and the Germans. Mrs. Freeman was secretly praying for the arrival of the Russians; the event would mean the end of World War II. Etta, unaware of her Jewish heritage was praying to Jesus.

Even while Mrs. Freeman resided in a Christian home, she feared for her life. As it was the Christmas season, German friends came to the house to visit a young Christian girl who lived there.

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Mrs. Freeman's anxiety subsided somewhat when she realized that Russian soldiers appeared in the town. Their presence meant that the Germans lost the war. She took this as her signal to leave the town. In January 1945, she and Etta left Wieliczka, walked to Krakow, a large city near Auschwitz and took the train back to her hometown of Wierzbnik. She felt it was time to find out how her husband fared the German occupation and she wanted him to see their daughter.

Mrs. Freeman soon learned that despite the end of the war, travelling was still not safe for Jews. The journey was long and dangerous. Etta attracted much attention from the trainload of Polish travellers and former soldiers who admired the little girl's blonde hair and blue eyes. Despite the danger on the freight train, Mrs. Freeman finally arrived safely in Wierzbnik. Mr. Freeman and his brother travelled on foot from Pokrzywnica to return to Wierzbnik when they became aware of the Russian presence. Thus, Mrs. Freeman, Mr. Freeman, his brother Abraham and Etta were reunited in the home that they had been forced to abandon approximately three years earlier. Upon their return, they also met up with some Jews fortunate enough to survive Auschwitz as well as those Jews that were in hiding or posing as "Aryans".

With the death of family members and the loss of a thriving business, as well as the overall devastating effects of the war, Mr. Freeman suffered from severe depression and a sense of degradation. For a short time, Etta, too, felt shock and confusion when the young girl was told of her family's Jewish heritage.

In 1950, the Freeman family immigrated to Canada and settled in Hamilton. When recalling the family's experiences during World War II, Mrs. Freeman remembers the daily hardships of starvation, sickness and fear and declares "we escaped concentration camps, but we struggled like animals."

Mrs. Freeman feels that her survival resulted from her strong faith, as well as her intense hopes of one day being able to tell the world of her experiences. In doing so, she prays that no one forget the persecution that was inflicted upon the Jews.





Rena Freeman's story is one of many in Hamilton. Her wish is that the Holocaust survivors in the area are as willing to talk of their experiences as she is of hers and, by doing so, she hopes this may contribute to the prevention of a similar disaster from ever occurring again.



HELEN JOSEPH  
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"Each day was a miracle to survive". These are the words of Mrs. Helen Joseph in summing up her life during the Holocaust. A survivor of Auschwitz, Mrs. Joseph tells her story of pain, suffering and hope.

She was born Helen Moskovits on October 20, 1927 in Khust, a small, predominately Jewish business city in Czechoslovakia.

In 1939, sections of Czechoslovakia were being taken over by Hungarian police who, following German orders, evacuated Jews from their homes. Not until 1944 however, were Helen Moskovits and her family directly affected by the injustice; the Hungarian police invaded Khust.

On an early morning in April, 1944, one day after Passover, the Hungarian police banged on the Moskovits' door. Although the family knew of the events occurring at the time, Mrs. Joseph recalls the shock she and her family felt upon the arrival of the Hungarians. The police ordered the Moskovits' to leave their house and to take only what they were able to carry.

At noon, the same day, Helen Moskovits, her parents, two sisters and two brothers were sent to one of the four to five organized Jewish ghettos that were set up in sections of Khust.

The conditions in the ghetto were inhumane. Many families shared one room and no one was allowed to leave the ghetto area. The Moskovits family was confined there for four weeks.

On a May morning, the members of the ghetto were ordered to pack. Again they were told to bring only what they could carry. Under strict supervision, they all walked to the train station approximately three miles away, unaware of their destination.

The train was already at the station when the eighty to one hundred Jews were assigned to enter the small box cars. The conditions on the train were unbearable; no ventilation, no food, no water and no washrooms.

By the afternoon, the train had reached the Hungarian - Polish border. Here,

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the Hungarian soldiers were replaced by the Germans. Before the departure of the Hungarians, they demanded that everyone hand over the jewellery that they were wearing. Everyone complied, for the Hungarians threatened that if one person did not hand over his/her valuables, then all the box car occupants would be shot.

The Jews still knew nothing of their destination. They talked among themselves about what could be happening but it was only speculation. Mrs. Joseph remembers how many of her acquaintances thought that they were on their way to work in German factories to replace the working German men who were needed at the front to fight.

By midnight, the train reached the Auschwitz station in Poland, yet at the time, the Jews were ignorant of their whereabouts. When the train stopped, the trainload of Jews heard a loud voice yelling outside the train ordering them to leave all their belongings. The Jews were told that their things would be delivered to them at a later time. Naive of their future, they frantically took out pencils to label their belongings. There was a scorching heat, but everyone put on as much clothing as possible, in an attempt to leave as little behind as possible.

One German officer, with a machine gun and a large dog, was standing on either side of each of the doorways when the boxcar doors were opened. As each person was stepping off the train, the soldiers ordered him/her into a group. Helen Moskovits was put into a group with hundreds of young women ranging from young teenagers to those in their middle thirties. She was in the same group as one of her sisters and her aunt, although she was not aware of this good fortune at the time.

German soldiers escorted the group of women to a nearby building for showers. Prior to the showers the woman were ordered to take off all of their clothing and to have their heads completely shaven. One "dress" was then given to each woman, which they properly sized among themselves. By morning everyone was finally washed and clothed. Following this ordeal, the possibility of recognizing any friends or relatives in the group was virtually impossible. Helen Moskovits still had no knowledge of the



fact that she was with her sister and her aunt.

They were then taken to the camp itself. The whole area was surrounded by high fences of barbed wire. Mrs. Joseph recalls how many young women were killed instantaneously when the strong force of the electric fence "pulled in" girls that got too close.

The women were shown their barracks. Mrs. Joseph estimates that there were about 32 barracks with approximately 1200 women in each. Each barrack had three tiers of "beds" which consisted of narrow wooden planks that often broke down. The barracks were headed by two bitter, ruthless Jewish women who had been in Auschwitz since 1942.

The days began at four o'clock in the morning. Together, the women had one hour to wash before the water would be turned off for the entire day.

After washing, the women were to line up in rows of five in order to be counted. The counting took up to three hours. The S.S. women, accompanied by their large dogs, punished those Jews not standing in a straight line, as well as anyone else they arbitrarily chose to harm.

The women were starving, thus when food was available to them, there was mass chaos. Each of the eight people who shared one small loaf of bread desperately ensured that their piece of bread was no smaller than the next persons portion. Mrs. Joseph remembers eating a "slice of bread you could see through." When they received soup, it was distributed from large garbage cans to which everyone frantically rushed. The many unfortunate women who were not able to get close enough to the cans, went without their soup.

The afternoons were very hot. The women were not working yet so there was nothing to do but lay in the barracks and wait.

By four o'clock in the afternoon, the women were lined up again and counted. Between the heat, thirst and hunger, standing for three hours was almost an impossibility. Those who fainted, which were many, were often taken away and never seen again.

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The day was a horrifying experience for Helen Moskowitz, however, she considered herself somewhat fortunate; by nightfall, Helen, her sister and her aunt realized that they were together.

The women soon started to ask questions about their relatives whom they had not seen. They were informed by other Jews that their relatives were being killed in the building across from their camp. The women did not believe that such an atrocity was occurring and they still had hopes that they would again see their families.

After a month at Auschwitz, any optimism that the women felt vanished. Mrs. Joseph recalls two incidences in particular which brought the women to the realization of what was actually taking place. They witnessed the influx of new trainloads of Jews, who, when passing the barracks, thought the women were "crazy people." The influx was a familiar sight; the women were part of such a herd one month earlier. Thus, they could predict the immediate future of the incoming young Jewish women.

Mrs. Josephs remembers one other night in which the women heard loud screaming from the next camp. Some individuals, looking through peak holes, saw hundreds of Jews being loaded on trucks. By morning, the building, which the women eventually learned was a crematorium, was releasing smoke from the chimneys for the entire day. The truck loads of Jews were never seen again. The women deduced the obvious.

Mrs. Joseph lived in the barracks for four weeks. Conditions were declining and she was still not working.

One afternoon, the soldiers ordered the Jews to form a line. The Germans needed 1200 - 1500 women and selections were to be made from each barrack. Helen Moskowitz, her sister and her aunt were three people among the thousands chosen. Although she did not know the reason they were being selected, Helen considered herself lucky that she was able to remain with her relatives.

The thousands of women were forced to walk to another camp and again were ordered to line up in rows of five. The German soldiers examined the women more closely and selected approximately 500 of them. Helen and her relatives were all chosen.

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During the night, the 500 women were taken to another camp. Again, their heads were shaven. The women were then taken to the showers, given a clean "dress" and were allowed to sleep.

In the morning, the women were put on boxcars. The conditions were slightly more bearable than those on the train to Auschwitz. The boxcars were equipped with washrooms and the soldiers, either injured or too old for the front, were not as strict as the young German officers at Auschwitz. Because of their young ages, the women guessed that they were being taken somewhere to work.

By night time, the train reached a densely wooded area near Bremen, Germany. The location was the site of a large bomb factory, well camouflaged by huge trees so that it could not be seen from overhead.

The rough S.S. women in charge of the camp ordered the Jews to line up so that they could be allotted their duties. They were appointed jobs associated with the filling and packaging of bombs, as well as other necessary functions. Helen Moskovits was assigned the labourous job of loading filled bombs onto trains. Her tasks also included heating the boiler so that the women were able to shower once a week. All the jobs were very closely supervised by the S.S. women who ensured that all the women were performing with maximum efficiency.

The meals available at the camp were scarce. For dinner, four people shared one small loaf of bread. Breakfast consisted of one cup of black coffee and lunch included a potato and a piece of cabbage floating in a small dish of soup.

The women remained at the camp from the summer of 1944 to the end of April 1945. At this time, they were packed in trains, which were boarded with German soldiers and travelled for approximately a week and one half.

In early May, the turning point arrived for Helen Moskovits as well as many others on the train. Although they were not aware of it at the time, the English had arrived. At about ten o'clock in the morning, the women heard low flying planes above their train and very heavy bombing nearby.



In a desperate attempt to avoid direct bombing, the women were ordered to lay down on the floor of the boxcars. Part of the train was hit and was forced to stop in its tracks; many women were killed.

Helen, her sister and her aunt as well as the other women who survived the bombing, were let out into the fields under the supervision of just two to three officers. As a result of the bombing, many of the officers were killed, were injured or ran away. About 150 -200 women, including Helen and her relatives were led to a small train station in a secluded wooded area.

Early the next morning a German woman opened the boxcars and informed the Jews that they were to be left there. They were finally free.

The Jewish women met up with some Russian and Polish Jews in a wooded area and together they looked for food. For two days, they cooked dried fish and knocked on the doors of nearby homes begging for food and news.

In the forest, the women found disabled German tanks as well as abandoned clothing. Only later did they realize that these findings were a sign that the English were nearby and that the Germans were losing power.

According to Mrs. Joseph, the English took over some nearby towns on May 4th or May 5th, 1945. Helen Moskovits, her relatives and some other women walked to one of the English occupied towns to seek food and necessary medical attention.

Representatives from the Red Cross arrived and took the Jews to another camp. There, they were given some food and were medically treated. Many died of disease - especially of typhus. According to Mrs. Joseph approximately 50 out of the 500 women survived. These included her sister and her aunt.

They were there for one week when the women were taken to another camp near the sea. All the German soldiers had disappeared.

About fifty women stayed in the cottage-like buildings. There, the women had food. They also ripped down the curtains and used bedsheets to hand sew some skirts and dresses.



Mrs. Joseph remembers sewing a coat from a light blanket covering one of the beds.

The Red Cross soon arranged where people were to go. Helen Moskovits, her sister and aunt went to Budapest, Hungary where relief camps were set up to aid the war victims.

Helen travelled from Budapest, Hungary to Slovakia and finally to Israel where she coincidentally met an old family acquaintance who aided her in finding a job and a place to sleep.

She married in Israel in 1950 to a young Czechoslovakian man. In 1952, Mrs. Joseph and her husband immigrated to Hamilton, where Mr. Joseph's brother was residing.

Mrs. Joseph's experiences during the war make it difficult for one to believe that she could have survived. When asked what effect the war had on her life, one justifiably expects a bitter response. Mrs. Joseph, however, proudly remarks that "the war made us strong individuals."





ELIZABETH SCHWARTZ  
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Mrs. Elizabeth Schwartz tells of her struggles at Auschwitz with one main objective-that the young readers of her story appreciate the opportunities and freedom available to them. Undoubtedly, this objective will be achieved.

Elizabeth Ormai was born in 1929 in Tiszadada, a small agricultural town in Hungary. When she was seven years old, her father died and she was raised singularly by her mother.

In 1939, Elizabeth travelled to Budapest, Hungary to continue her schooling. When her mother became aware of the German invasion of Hungary, she went to Budapest to retrieve her daughter. When they returned to Tiszadada, they discovered that the Germans had occupied the town.

One month following the arrival of the Germans, the Jewish ghettos were formed. Following German orders, Elizabeth, her sister, her mother, as well as thousands of other Jews vacated their homes in order to reside in the ghettos.

The Ormai family was put in a barn with approximately one thousand other Jews. The living conditions were poor. The room was filled "from corner to corner" with individuals who were inequipped with sleeping or washing facilities. A minimal amount of food and personal belongings were allowed into the ghettos and because the Jews were unable to work and earn money, making purchases was an impossibility. Mrs. Schwartz recalls that "we just existed."

The Jews were there for six weeks when the German soldiers walked them to the train station. Although unaware of their future whereabouts, the Jews were destined for Auschwitz. When they were let off the train they were divided into groups according to their ages. The elderly were taken away and then gassed because of their inability to do labourous work. The younger Jews were categorized by gender and then separated.

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The women were taken to the "Lager A" barracks where they remained for one month. There, no necessities were provided, such as water with which to wash. Since food was not available to the Jews, they only ate what they were fortunate enough to find on the ground. No work was assigned to them, so days and nights were spent waiting.

The young women were then moved to "Lager C". Here conditions were slightly more bearable. Although the women were still not working, they were given some food which consisted of black coffee, a small loaf of bread which was to be shared by six people and cooked pine needles. Washing facilities were minimal and consequently lice were infesting the women's bodies.

Two or three weeks were spent at "Lager C" when Josef Mengele arrived at the barracks. His periodic visits to Auschwitz were familiar, as well as fearfully anticipated. He determined the destiny of numerous Jews by choosing from a line those who would work and those would die. After making his selection from the line-up of women at "Lager C", the women chosen to live were sent to "Lager B", which was more commonly known as the "Czech Lager". Those who were elected by Mengele to die were immediately ordered to the gas chambers.

The sanitary conditions of the barracks were inhumane. Lice infestation was increasing and as a result of this, as well as the dirt, women developed large, itchy patches which eventually covered their entire bodies.

Shoes and clothing were supplied. Most, however, were extremely impractical for the way of life led at Auschwitz. The women were allowed to select one pair of shoes from a pile previously owned by Jews sent to the gas chambers and crematoriums. Elizabeth desperately grabbed the first pair of shoes that she saw, however, the result of her efforts was to no avail. The high-heeled shoes she took from the pile were useless to her - because of her young age she had never worn high heels. Also, the ground at the camp consisted of rough stone so wearing her high heeled shoes was an impossibility. As a consequence, Elizabeth went without shoes for her entire stay at the "Czech Lager".

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The women were also told to take one dress from a large heap of clothing. The dress that Elizabeth obtained was much too small and therefore, she wore a blanket around her which was tied at the waist with a piece of rope. Because she had no other clothing, Elizabeth was forced to wear the same "dress" until after the war ended.

Every morning the women were awakened while it was still dark and were lined up to be counted. Because they were not working, they were ordered to lay in ditches for the entire day. Only at night were the Jews permitted to occupy the barracks.

For three months Elizabeth and another women were assigned the morbid task of pushing a two-wheeled cart to gather the mass of dead bodies scattered throughout the barracks. The woman with whom Elizabeth shared this job was eventually chosen by Mengele for the gas chamber.

At this point, Mrs. Schwartz recollects her feelings towards death during her time at Auschwitz. Death did not frighten her. Instead, she viewed it as the ultimate freedom from the unyielding pain and suffering that was to last as long as her stay at Auschwitz.

One morning the Germans entered the "Czech Lager" where they selected individuals to board the boxcars. The Jews were taken to Leipzig, Germany and were put to work in a large factory which manufactured V2 rockets. The women formed an assembly line, with each woman responsible for a specific part of the rocket. At the end of the line, the Germans inspected the finished product. Because the Germans knew who was responsible for the different parts of the rocket, any woman who attempted sabotage was caught and immediately shot.

Every day the women had to walk five kilometres to the train that would take them to the factory. Before their departure, they would receive one cup of black coffee. After working the entire day, they returned to the barracks where they were supplied with some liverwurst and bread. Three working women were allowed to share one small loaf of bread as opposed to the unemployed women who were given a loaf of bread to be shared by six.





Elizabeth and the others remained at the camp for three to four months when one night heavy bombing was heard nearby. As the air raid was approaching, the Germans felt it necessary to move the Jews elsewhere. They were forced to relocate so that they would not be found by the Americans, but the Jews were naive of the fact that the bombing represented an American presence.

The Germans left the Jews in the forest. They were told nothing of their circumstances and thus were unaware of their newly acquired freedom. Walking through the forest, the women search for food. Fortunately, one person had some matches which enabled the women to make a fire. They heated and ate snails. According to Mrs. Schwartz, approximately 60 percent of the women died from diarrhea inflicted by the eating of these snails.

By morning, there were hundreds of men and women in the forest. Despite the fact they had gathered there, they were still unaware that they had become permanently freed from German control.

The Jews walked to a nearby town, but from the hundreds who started together, only sixty reached the town. These included Elizabeth, her sister and her mother. The empty houses in the town, once occupied by German families, were raided by the Jews for food, but they found none. The Germans had taken their belongings in a covered wagon and left nothing in the houses. Some of the older Jews went to look for food; they found a dead horse nearby which they cut up, cooked and ate.

Frightened that the Germans would return, the 60 Jews left the house and went to Friedberg, Germany where they stayed in a barn for a day. In the morning, they saw some soldiers and tanks which the Jews soon learned were American. The Americans had found the abandoned covered wagon carrying the German belongings. The Jews were told they could take what they needed from the wagon. They took canned liver and some honey cake and shared it amongst themselves.

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By the time the Americans came en masse, there were twenty Jews alive from the sixty that had reached Friedberg. Forty had died primarily because of severe cases of diarrhea.

A short time after this, Elizabeth's mother decided that she and her daughters should return home to Tiszadada. Because the bridges had been blown up, there were no trains operating and thus the Ormais, along with two others travelled to Prague, Czechoslovakia by foot. Mrs. Schwartz remembers the unbearable soreness of her feet and her entire body from the long, arduous walk.

When they reached Prague, the Red Cross supplied them with food. They then walked to Budapest, Hungary, stealing on the way what they could not buy.

By the time they reached Budapest, the Ormais and the two individuals who accompanied them were in terrible condition. Elizabeth was still covered with the same blanket she had worn during her stay at Auschwitz and her mother weighed only 85 pounds. All five persons were heavily infested with lice.

The Hungarian civilians pitied the five Jews walking the streets of Budapest and as a result, the Ormais and the two others received alot of paper money on the street. Elizabeth's mother wanted to buy her daughters shoes with what she thought to be a lot of money. When they arrived at the store however, she was told that because of the high inflation, her money was almost worthless.

They proceeded to Betlen Ter-2, a place in Budapest. Here the Jews were fumigated to rid themselves of the lice and dirt that had been collecting on them since Auschwitz. They were given some clothes, food and perhaps most importantly hope.

The train that would take them back to their home town had finally arrived after a few days. Since it was packed with Hungarians, Elizabeth's mother and sister were forced to sit on a bumper which was situated between two cars. Elizabeth had to hang on an outside railing on the side of the train.

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The train let them off 10 kilometres from their home town. Thus the Jews proceeded to walk the remainder of the way with periodic lifts from passing buggies. They arrived in Tiszadada on July 29th, 1945. Of the fourteen Jewish families who had resided there prior to the war, the three Ormai women and their two companions were the only Jews who returned.

When the Ormais arrived home, they found that gypsies had been living in their house. When they refused to leave upon the Ormai's return, Mrs. Ormai went to the authorities to rid the gypsies from her home. By the end of August, 1945 the gypsies left.

Elizabeth remained there with her mother and her sister until she married Nick Schwartz in the fall of 1945. She then moved to Taktaharkany, a small town in which her husband lived, located about 7 kilometres from Tiszadada.

In October, 1945, Elizabeth returned to Tiszadada to visit her mother and sister. At this time the Hungarian Gentiles, who called themselves the "Hungarian Mothers", felt that the five Jews who had returned were five too many. The "Hungarian Mothers" threatened the Jews with sickles, spades and shovels in an attempt to gather them at the nearby Tisza River and drown them there. Because of this, the two Jews who had accompanied the Ormais escaped and eventually reached Australia. Elizabeth's family fled to her husband's home town. From there they went to Vienna, Austria where they stayed for two months.

In 1946, they arrived in Paris, France. There they worked for two years to obtain enough money for Farmers Permits. Each cost \$200 and these permits enabled individuals to immigrate to Canada to work on farms.

Mrs Ormai remarried and remained in Paris. Because of her heart condition she was not allowed to enter Canada on a Farmers Permit, but later arrived with her husband when they were sponsored by Elizabeth and Nick. Her sister married and from Paris, she and her husband travelled to Israel.



Elizabeth and Nick came to Smithville, Ontario and as a result of their permits obtained jobs on a farm. Although they were required to stay there for one year, they left after six weeks. With a lift from a passing milk truck, Elizabeth and Nick arrived in Hamilton. Once there, they obtained a number of jobs in order to establish themselves in the city.

The painful memories of the Holocaust are still difficult for Mrs. Schwartz to discuss, yet she does not allow them to overshadow the memories of those who were close to her during the war. In an attempt to reunite with the two individuals who had accompanied the Ormais to Hungary, Mrs. Schwartz placed ads in many international papers. Three of the five returning Jews from Tiszadada will reunite in the summer of 1984. At this time they will gather in Hamilton to speak of their disturbing past, as well as their promising future.





MAIER SOLOMON  
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Maier Solomon bears a constant reminder of his stay in the concentration camp. His bodily scars represent the continuous torture that was inflicted upon him during the Holocaust. In recounting his experiences, Maier describes the gruesome treatment that he and other Jews were forced to endure under Hitler's reign.

Maier Solomon was born in 1918 in Moftinul Mic (Carei), a town in the Transylvannian region of Romania. It was mainly an agricultural town consisting of 30,000 people, 5,000 of whom were Jewish. Maier's family was very large; he was raised with five brothers and five sisters, most of whom were married.

In 1938 Maier was incorporated in the army at the age of twenty and in December, 1939 he went to the Russian border, near Basarabia, in an attempt to protect his native home from Russian takeover.

Hitler gave the Transylvannian region over to Hungary in August 1940. At this point Maier deserted the army and returned home. After a couple of months, he was taken away by the Baros, an anti-Semitic organization headed by the Hungarian government. It opposed his outward expressions concerning his religious views. Maier was sent to an all-male work camp in Nagy Banya for three months, after which he went back home.

Upon his arrival, however, he was taken to another work camp and then transferred to others, the last of which was Orkeny, where he worked for two years.

In 1944, the Russian army was nearing Hungary, so Maier was moved, along with approximately 200 other Jews, to the Austrian-Hungarian border town of Kormend. In the meantime, Maier's entire family had been taken to Auschwitz.

At Kormend the treatment of the Jews was dreadful. All of their belongings were taken from them by the Hungarian officers, who then viciously beat the Jews with sticks and irons. Maier, as well as the Jews accompanying him, were then transferred from the control of the Hungarian officers to the German S.S. At this time, the Jews joined 4,800 others who had been under German rule. While under German control, the Jews were given "decent" food to eat and water with which to bathe. According to Maier, the Jews were treated



more humanely by the Germans than by the Hungarians. For three months, he was located on the Austrian side of the Hungarian - Austrian border. There, he was assigned the task of digging ditches for the German army.

Following the Russian occupation of Budapest, approximately 5,000 Jews were moved into a line and inspected by the Germans. Those individuals who were fatigued or ill were shot instantly. Maier and the others who survived the shootings were forced to dig a large ditch in which to bury the dead.

The Jews then marched to Mathossen, a concentration camp located in Austria. In order to reach the camp, they were forced to climb the Alps. As they climbed the treacherous mountains, two German S.S. soldiers stood at the bottom and shot sporadically into the crowd. According to Maier, approximately 1,000 Jews were killed. Those who survived were ordered to return to the bottom of the mountain, dig a large ditch, collect the dead and bury them. Approximately 4,000 Jews remained to continue the trek to Mathossen.

In November 1944, Maier arrived at Mothossen, a large camp surrounded by electric wire. He was put into a tent with approximately 10,000 other Jews. According to Mr. Solomon, 80 per cent of them acquired typhus and were "dying like flies".

Every morning, S.S. soldiers shot through the tent to awaken the Jews and many of them died as a result. Maier was forced to collect the dead and put them on a horse wagon. He then transported them to the crematorium.

The conditions at Mathossen were intolerable. One small loaf of bread was divided among 20 people which they ate with either cabbage or beet soup.

In March, 1945, Maier and roughly 20,000 Jews were taken out of Mathossen because the Germans were informed of the Russian approach.

Maier and the others marched approximately 100 kilometres westward to Gurczhirhen, which was another concentration camp. It was a relatively new camp in which there were already 100,000 people, all of whom were not working. Maier was in Gurczhirhen until it was liberated by the Americans on May 5, 1945. At this time, approximately 50,000



people in the camp gained their freedom. Maier was taken to a hospital in Linz, Austria because he had contracted typhus. He was unconscious for two months and following his recovery in July, weighed a mere 60 pounds.

Maier decided to return home. He took a bus to Bratislava, Czechoslovakia and then a train to Moftinul Mic. When he arrived there, the Transylvannian region had been given back to the Romanians by the Russians. Only 300 Jews returned including three of Maier's brothers and one of his sisters.

In 1946, Maier bought a meat factory and shortly thereafter, he married Elizabeth Katz, a woman from a nearby town. A year later they had a son whom they named Leslie.

Romania became a communist country in 1945. In 1948, Maier was put in charge of collecting livestock and overseeing the operations of all the butcher shops and slaughterhouses in the region. He was under the constant surveillance of a supervisor who ensured that Maier was working at his utmost capacity. He tried to apply for a passport to leave Romania but he was unable to do so because his expertise was needed by the Communists.

Maier and his family were finally permitted to leave Romania in December, 1958 and travelled to Israel because of his strong Zionist convictions.

In February, 1961, they arrived in Hamilton where Maier's sister-in-law was living.

Since moving to Hamilton, his Zionist tendencies have not subsided. Maier's lasting memories of the Holocaust have intensified his desires to some day return to Israel.



HELEN GROSS

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The words "Never in my dreams did I think I would survive" most aptly describe Helen Gross' feelings of having endured the incredulous horrors of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. Despite her painful recollections, Mrs. Gross shares her story.

In 1925, Helen Mendelovitz was born in Barkaszova, Czechoslovakia where she lived with her parents, her grandmother, three younger sisters and one brother. It was primarily an agricultural town with a population of approximately 1,500. A majority of businesses were owned by the Jewish community which consisted of about 200 people. The Gentiles and Jews in Barkaszova co-existed peacefully.

In 1938, Hitler gave Barkaszova to Hungary; consequently, when the Hungarians arrived, the young were not permitted to attend university in Barkaszova. Their only alternative was to travel to Budapest, Hungary where they were given the opportunity to obtain a trade.

Helen left her family and travelled to Budapest in 1941 where she learned dressmaking skills. Her food and shelter were provided by the Jewish community.

On Sunday, March 19, 1944 the Germans occupied Budapest. Upon their arrival, Helen was eager to return home and be with her family, for she knew that the near future would bring difficult times. When she arrived at the train station to purchase her ticket, she was immediately asked by the Hungarian police if she was Jewish and was then arrested instantly. She was put with thousands of other Jews who had also been arrested and stayed with them overnight. In the morning they were taken to a camp in Kis Tartarcsa located on the outskirts of Budapest.

After six weeks, the Jews were moved once again. They were transported by boxcars and eventually reached the town of Auschwitz in May 1944. Helen was among the first group of Hungarians who were taken to Auschwitz, thus, she was compelled to walk to the camp because the railroads had not yet been completed.

When the group entered the camp, the men and women were separated. The women were lined up and each tattooed with an identification number. They were given

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showers, after which the women received clothing that had once been worn by other Jews at Auschwitz. The women were then taken to their camp in which the smoking chimney from a nearby barrack was in full view; Helen was informed by a female prisoner for what it was used.

Mrs. Gross remembers the medicinal odour of the food that she and the other women were given upon their arrival at Auschwitz and still believes that it was heavily dosed with a tranquillizing drug. She believes that the physical effects of the drugs interfered with the women's menstruation and she also contends that the mental effects of the drugs were that the women were less conscious of the severity of their predicament.

Helen was chosen to work on the railroad that was to eventually bring in more Jews to Auschwitz. In June, trainloads of people arrived from the Jewish ghettos and the formation of line-ups to the crematoria became a regular practice for the Jews. Helen saw the chimneys smoking all through the day and night and constantly wondered whether these crematoria had ended the lives of members of her family.

Josef Mengele frequently appeared at the camp to select the women he felt were prime candidates for work or death. Helen survived his repeated visits and was chosen to work. She was selected to sort food and clothing which had once belonged to the Jewish men and women brought into Auschwitz.

Helen found the work very trying. She was constantly confronted with friends and family members transported into Auschwitz, most of whom would face their death. She also witnessed a number of trucks loaded with dead, naked bodies unable to fit into the overcrowded crematoriums. Helen continued sorting for a few weeks. After her job was completed, the sorted articles were loaded on trucks and taken to Germany.

In July, Helen was taken to work at another section of the camp. By October she was working in a weaving factory and in November and December her job consisted of digging the land between two rivers in order that they be joined. The work was strenuous and tiresome.



On December 31, 1944, after remaining in Auschwitz for approximately eight months, Helen was selected to leave the camp. She was taken out of Auschwitz only to find that she was destined for another camp.

She arrived at Bergen-Belsen on January 1, 1945. The conditions in the barracks were horrendous. Everyone was filthy and because their heads had not been shaven, their long hair became a breeding ground for lice. Mrs. Gross vividly remembers hearing the continual cries of suffering women.

Helen had a number of jobs, including working in a weaving factory and in the woods, cutting down tress. The women's job performance was closely supervised by the German S.S. who would order their large dogs to jump on those women who were not working steadily.

By March, 1945, conditions in the barracks were deteriorating rapidly. because the end of the war was approaching, there was no food or water available to the women. Lice infestation was increasing and uncontrollable. "There were mountains and mountains of dead people", most of whom died from diarrhea. Mrs. Gross painfully remembers wrapping the dead women beside her in their blankets and putting the covered bodies aside. One of the women to who Helen tended was her best friend.

The British arrived at Bergen-Belsen on April 15, 1945 and those Jews fortunate enough to have survived the disease and starvation were liberated. They were given the same food as that of the British, however, their intentions were futile for those Jews who were beyond the point of recovery.

The British aided the women by spraying them with DDT to rid them of their lice and by sending the severely ill to Sweden to seek proper medical attention. Helen did not want to go to Sweden. Instead, the British took Helen and other Jews to a large army base where they were given some canned food. They also walked to the nearby farming town of Belsen to obtain fresh food where they caught and cooked chickens. The walk to Belsen was the first time the Jews had experienced true freedom since the conclusion of the war: "We looked back and couldn't believe no one was following us."

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After four weeks, Helen and the others were taken to a town near Hanover, Germany. From there she wished to return to Barkaszova; however, no rail way transportation was available because Germany had been completely demolished.

In July, Helen was taken through Germany by an open truck. She was then able to reach Prague, Czechoslovakia and travel by boxcar to Budapest. There she met with people desperately searching for their family members and was informed that her uncle and her fourteen year old brother were alive in Barkaszova.

Helen was anxious to return to see the surviving members of her family. According to Mrs. Gross, only 20 out of the 200 Jews that had lived there prior to the war, came back. She insists that the worst aspect of her entire ordeal was arriving home to find that so few friends and family members had returned. Before the war, eight members of her family had been living in her home. Now there were two and she felt very much alone.

Helen remained in her hometown until September 1945. She then left Barkaszova as it was being taken over by the Russians and returned to Budapest.

She travelled by train from Budapest to Prague, where she married in December 1945. The following year she and her husband reached Munich, Germany where they went to the United Nations Relief Association, a large relief camp where they gained some assistance. Since Munich was an American zone, those individuals at the camp who desired to immigrate to the United States were allowed to do so.

Helen and her husband were sponsored by his family to come to America. They travelled by boat and reached New York in 1947. In the years following, Helen's husband passed away. In 1959, she married Morris Gross in New York. Later that year, they moved to Hamilton, Ontario where Morris' relatives resided.

As with all survivors of the Holocaust, indelible emotional scars still linger. Mrs. Gross still retains her painful memories; however, she maintains a life in Hamilton which is filled with much pleasure and happiness from her family.



SAM SZPIRGLAS  
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The theory of the "Survival of the Fittest" rang true in the case of Sam Szpirglas and his heroic struggle during the war years. He still believes that his physical strength and agility aided him in surviving his arduous experiences.

Sam Szpirglas was born on October 26, 1917. He was raised with two sisters in Warsaw, Poland where he also received his education.

In September, 1939, Sam joined the army and worked with the Red Cross. His job was to help erect barricades surrounding Warsaw in an attempt to protect the capital city from German invasion. The danger was that once Warsaw was occupied all of Poland would be under German control. All attempts failed however, for Warsaw was invaded by Germany. The entire city was demolished by bombings and fires. According to Mr. Szpirglas, the Poles' primary concern was to help each other to survive despite any opposing religious beliefs they may have held at the time.

The Germans filled the Warsaw ghetto in 1940 by pushing out people from many surrounding towns and gathering them in one restricted area. Sam was taken there with his parents and his two sisters, one of whom was married and had a two year old daughter. He, as well as other Jews, were required to do forced labour in the ghetto. They received no money or food for their work; consequently, starvation was rampant.

In 1941, conditions in the ghetto were declining and as a result, many Jews were very ill or dying. Sam felt that fleeing the ghetto was the only chance of surviving the harsh conditions. In June of that year, he escaped from the ghetto by crawling beneath the sewers of Warsaw. He carried neither money nor identification, but managed to travel from town to town to obtain food and water from other Jews.

Sam spent approximately eight days walking to a village located outside of Warsaw. Because he was very fluent in Polish, his Jewish accent was not noticeable enough for passing Poles to believe he was a Jew. An isolated incident





did occur however, in which Sam was attacked by Polish youngsters. He felt it necessary not to retaliate, for any harm inflicted upon the young Poles would most likely have resulted in the blaming and killing of nearby Jews. The trek to the village was long and tiresome so Sam slept in the demolished synagogues that had been destroyed by the heavy bombing in the area.

He finally reached Charsznica, a district of Krakow, where he lived with his mother's sister. There, he worked in the fields where, fortunately, everyone on the farm mistook Sam for being a non-Jew.

As time passed, the situation for Jews worsened. In relation to Sam Szpirglas, this was exemplified when he overheard the German S.S. ask the area postmaster if any Jews frequented the post office. The postmaster immediately answered in the negative. Hoping he would go unnoticed, Sam sent some potatoes to his parents who were still residing in the Warsaw ghetto. The package, however, never reached its destination.

Sam remained in the village until 1943, when the German S.S. and Polish police cleared all the houses in and around the village and forced all the occupants onto the main road. Sam was among the many Jews who were evacuated from their homes. He and the others who were chosen by the S.S. to live were then put on wagons destined for Slomnic. The remainder were killed. Every minute following, one Jew was taken off the wagon and shot. Everyone on the wagon remained as inconspicuous as possible by not moving, in an attempt to go unnoticed by the S.S. Sam vividly remembers how the people were stricken with terror and panic. Upon arriving at Slomnic the surviving Jews were taken to a densely wooded area to dig ditches for the dead.

On the third day at Slomnic, the German S.S. selected the Jews whom they believed could serve a purpose by remaining alive and loaded them on the wagon. Some individuals on the wagon eventually were divided by age and gender and were put in trains while the remaining Jews were killed.



Sam and the other Jews were taken by train to Plaszow. By the time they arrived, many of them had contracted typhus, thus they were shot. Sam was among the many who had acquired it; however, he was strong enough to hide the symptoms.

At Plaszow, some of the Jews were loaded on other trains and sent to Treblinka, a large work camp in Poland. Sam was chosen to remain. There was mass panic at Plaszow; people were hit and whipped in order to have them give their belongings over to the S.S. No one knew where they were or what their future held for them.

The Jews were assigned extremely labourous jobs. Sam was given the job of building train tracks, which he performed for one and one half years. Later, Sam and others who were strong enough to work, were transferred to another camp. Because of massive starvation, many people were dying and those who became weak, were shot.

At the beginning of 1944, the healthiest Jews were taken to Skarzsko-Kamienko where they remained for nine months. It was the location of a large ammunition factory in which many men and women worked. The workers were supplied with no protective equipment and little food. If any of the ammunition produced in the factory was found faulty, selected Jews were accused of sabotage and immediately shot.

When the Germans were informed of the Russian approach, they gathered the healthiest Jews and loaded them on trains. Sam was among the young men taken. They were transferred to Chastochowa where he was assigned a number of jobs; from the trains he unloaded stones that were to be used in the manufacturing of steel, he worked in a steel plant as a highly skilled mechanic and as a crane operator. For being a good worker, Sam was privileged to receive food which was hidden in a crane for him by his German boss. His jobs were extremely strenuous and many other Jews who were given similar tasks were unable to endure them.

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Sam and the others remained in Chastochowa for nine months after which Jews were moved again because of news of the Russian approach. They were put on a train and reached Buchenwald, Germany in January, 1945. When the trains were unloaded, the majority of individuals were found dead of hypothermia as a result of the freezing temperatures.

When in Buchenwald, the Jews were put in sterilized water to clean themselves. Sam recalls that those Jews who removed their eye glasses did not have them returned, therefore, he wore his continuously. After bathing, the Jews were given clean clothes and then were counted. Each day they were given one slice of pumpernickle bread and a bowl of watered down soup.

A day after the Jews arrival, the Germans announced that they needed auto mechanics to work in the factory repairing demolished trucks. Sam registered for the job but, because factory jobs were in great demand, his request was denied. Later in 1945, Sam was accepted to work in Leopold Hall, the location of a large airplane factory which had sixty Jews repairing damaged German airplanes. Among the Jews there were 58 Polish Jews and two Hungarian Jews, all of whom were watched very closely by the German S.S.

Because of Sam's great physical strength, he was chosen to perform personal tasks for the German S.S. who would reward him for his services. In one instance, he transported a suitcase for an officer to his girlfriend and received a slice of bread and a large piece of preserved meat for performing the task. He had not eaten such a meal for more than five years.

The Jews worked in the factory for only a short time when the Germans moved them out of Leopold Hall because of the advancing Russians. The Jews, as well as some Gentiles, were forced to march for one month sleeping only for a few hours in stables filled with the manure of horses that had once stayed there. While marching from Leopold Hall, the Germans felt that there were too many people making the journey, so to resolve the "problem" some of the Jews were shot.



Many Jews died of starvation. In a desperate attempt to survive, some ate grass, but in doing so, died instantly. Few found potatoes; however, those individuals who picked them up were killed immediately by the S.S. A friend of Sam's managed to stay alive by giving one of the three potatoes he found to a hungry German officer. Sam's friend then kept one for himself and gave the other to Sam.

The Germans took the Jews to a concentration camp called Shenenberg, after which they were taken to Mugdenberg because of the oncoming Russians. The Germans then forced the Jews to march for one month. They arrived in Swerean, near Haganow, Germany, where the Jews were liberated and the S.S. were forced to surrender.

Upon seeing the American soldiers, Sam felt as though he was dreaming because he realized that he was finally free. Only ten to twelve Jews, out of the 60 that had been together, had survived their traumatic ordeal. They were supplied with food and clothing and given some medical attention from the Jewish American officers.

Sam proceeded to Lumenberg, near Hamburg, Germany to seek aid from a large relief camp. He then travelled through Germany, including Bergen-Belsen, in an attempt to find surviving Jews and re-unite them with other members of their family. Mr. Szpirglas is still viewed as a war hero by members of many Jewish families which he helped to bring together following the war. He proudly keeps one letter of appreciation.

After five weeks, Sam returned to Warsaw, Poland. He soon left however, because he had sadly discovered that all of his relatives had been killed in the Warsaw ghetto. He travelled once again to Lumenberg, after which he married Anna Lanweiber in 1946. In 1947, they had a son named Abe.

In May, 1948, Sam, his wife and their son travelled by boat to Canada. Sam established himself as a tailor in Montreal, where he and his family resided for eight years, in 1956, the Szpirglas' moved to Hamilton whereupon Sam became a





peddler in the scrap business.

Throughout his account, Mr. Szpirglas' physical strength has been highly stressed; however, his emotional strength must also be emphasized. It is through his words "not to give up easy is a lot" that Mr. Szpirglas reveals his lasting optimism, spirit and his continuous "hope for the next day".



HELEN VINE  
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Helen Vine's life in France during the Holocaust consisted of running and hiding. During this time she proved to be strong and courageous, for she never gave up the struggle to protect herself and her family from the threat of the German S.S. She proclaims that "I was the type that I could survive."

Helen Goldberg was born in 1902 into a family which would eventually consist of ten children. She and her family lived in Ilesia, Poland which was under Russian control. After some time they moved to Wierzbniak, Poland.

On September 9, 1923 Helen married Samuel Liberbaum, a young man whom she met in Wierzbniak. They were married for one year when Helen gave birth to their first child, a son named Copel.

The poor employment situation in Poland made it very difficult for Samuel to support his family and consequently, 1925, he left for France in an attempt to obtain a well paying job. The move was profitable since he became a tailor with the help of a friend in France. Helen did not accompany her husband because she did not want to leave her mother with the heavy responsibility of having to care for the children. In 1926, Helen's father died so her commitment to help her mother became much stronger.

Samuel returned to Wierzbniak in 1927 to be with Helen. He once again attempted to make a living in Poland; however, the employment situation was still dismal and he became discontent with his life in Wierzbniak. Following the death of Helen's father, Samuel felt burdened with the role he played as father to Helen's brothers and sisters. Helen's mother understood his predicament and encouraged her daughter to take Copel and move to France with her husband. In 1929, they arrived in Paris where he again worked as a tailor. By 1931 they had bought some sewing machines so that Samuel and Helen could work from their home.

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Helen's sister and brother-in-law were also living in France. He was working as a waiter in Paris and had knowledge of a Kosher restaurant for students that was for sale. He wished to buy the restaurant, but was short of finances so he approached Helen and Samuel for funds. They invested money from a \$600 inheritance they had received upon the death of Samuel's uncle and went into partnership with Helen's brother-in-law.

The restaurant proved to be a thriving business. A rabbi ensured that the food served there was strictly kosher and both Jewish and non-Jewish students alike frequented the restaurant.

Samuel, Helen and her brother-in-law owned the restaurant from 1932 to 1939. During this time Helen gave birth to a son (in 1935) whom she named Solomon. With a successful business and a second child, Helen's life was one of hard work, but more importantly, it was one of contentment and stability.

In 1939, however, stability for Jews in Europe became non-existent. With the onslaught of World War II, Helen could no longer pay the rent on her building. Since this was coupled with the uprising of the Nazi party, Helen and her family had to flee Paris. They travelled 800 miles and hid in a small apartment in the town of Lyon.

In 1942, The Liberbaum's safety was threatened so they moved to a cottage with the aid of a friend of Samuel's. The woman who owned the cottage worked days and allowed Helen, who was then pregnant with her third child, to stay in the house with Solomon during the day. Samuel and Copel worked for the entire day in factories, and at night, the family secretly slept in the lumber factory in which Copel worked because he had gained access to a factory key.

As months passed, Helen was nearing the birth of her baby. This was a time of great difficulty for her; abortion had become an inviting alternative in her oppressive wartime existence. When Helen was ready to give birth, her doctor, knowing Helen was Jewish, unselfishly admitted her into the hospital as an unmarried

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woman under an assumed name. At a time when thousands of Jews were being deported from France, Helen realized the danger she faced if her Gentile doctor were to expose her Judaism, but she said "I put my confidence in him" because she had no other choice. In 1943, Helen gave birth to her third child named Lillian.

That year a non-Jewish neighbour of Helen's aided her in her desperate struggle to hide from the Germans. The woman's brother-in-law had been taken away by the German S.S. so she gave his key to Helen in order that she could live in his room. Helen lived there with Solomon and Lillian; however Copel who was then 19 years old, joined the underground with other young men in an attempt to obtain knowledge concerning German movement. Helen was continuously worried about her son, since she "didn't know where he was or what he did." Her concerns were greatly intensified when she was informed that ten young men from the underground had been hung in Lyon.

Helen realized however, that her responsibility rested in saving her life as well as the lives of her husband and her young children. In her own words, she stated that "Our life was at stake. I was worried for ourselves." Her situation was such that it was impossible for her to leave her room because of the constant life-threatening predicament which faced the Jews. With much struggle Helen was able to obtain an Aryan passport. Thus, she felt somewhat confident about taking her children outside of the room where a helpful neighbour, pretending to play with Lillian, often slipped some useful supplies, such as soap and alcohol, into Helen's bag.

As the situation worsened for Jews in France, Helen and her children moved to the country in June and hid in a room which was rented to them by a friend of Samuel's. Samuel was still working in a factory and told Helen that he would be able to join her the following week at which time he was to receive a short holiday. When he arrived in the country he informed her that because they had a small child and a baby, he was able to receive double food rations from the factory. He decided that he would travel to his friend, from whom they rented their first cottage





and obtained food from her with a portion of his ration tickets.

On Friday, June 30, 1944, Samuel left his family and assured them that he would return by nightfall with the much needed food and supplies. When Samuel reached the woman's home, he filled his knapsack with food and other necessities and later boarded the train which was to bring him to the country. While on the train, he was spotted by the German S.S. who were curious about the full knapsack which he was carrying. The S.S. officers apprehended Samuel and searched his knapsack. They immediately recognized that he was a free Jew and sent him to another section of the train where other Jewish prisoners had been gathered. A woman on the train who had witnessed the entire occurrence informed Helen's son Solomon about what had happened to Samuel, Solomon then conveyed the unfortunate information to his mother.

Helen was distraught over the news concerning Samuel; however, it was important for her to concern herself with the safety of her family. She was frightened of the fact that her name and whereabouts were printed on the ration tickets that had been in Samuel's knapsack and realized the great danger she and her children faced by remaining where they were.

They packed some of their belongings and returned to Lyon to stay with Samuel's friend in her cottage. Helen remained there for approximately two months. During this time she received an anonymous letter from Paris informing her that Samuel was with the writer's brother-in-law, living in Germany. Helen was overwhelmed with the news.

On September 2, 1944 the American army invaded Lyon and consequently, Helen and her children were finally able to come out of hiding. Intensely hoping that her husband would return from Germany, she went to the apartment where they once lived only to find that the Germans had taken all of their belongings. Samuel never returned and after five years the French government sent Helen papers declaring her a widow at the age of forty-six.

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She remained in Lyon for one year, after which she and her children moved to Paris where they were joined by Copel. Helen opened a small, but prosperous restaurant which served hundreds of displaced persons seeking inexpensive meals. By 1950, however, the restaurant was yielding no profit because those persons who had frequented it had eventually moved to different locations. She was therefore, forced to close her business and soon realized that she had no reason to remain in France.

In 1953, Helen and her children left France and travelled to Hamilton, Ontario. At the end of that year Helen married Harry Vine, a fruit peddler working in Hamilton. Helen became discontent with her financial status and states that "I was my own boss for 10 years. I didn't want to wait for my husband to come home and give me money. This was not a life for me." In order to reconcile her situation she rented a store on York Street and converted it into a restaurant called "Vine's Delicatessen." It was very successful and was known throughout Hamilton's Jewish community for its Kosher cuisine. Although Helen no longer has her restaurant she is still pleased with the hard work she dedicated to its success.

During the Holocaust, Mrs. Vine's perserverance to live overshadowed her continuous fear of being found by the Germans. She definatly states that "I was too young to die", after which she proudly glances at her framed photograph of Vine's Delicatessen.



PAUL BOGART  
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Paul Bogart's life during the Holocaust justifies why, for him, "the past was very destructive to think of." Although his memories of World War II can never be erased, Paul made peace with himself long ago and openly relays his story to those who desire knowledge of his Holocaust experience.

Paul Boguchwal was born in 1924 and was raised with two brothers. He grew up in Kiecle, a large city in Poland, with a population of over 55,000 (26,000 of whom were Jewish.) There, Paul's father and grandfather worked in the jewellery business.

In 1939 the war broke out and the German S.S., the Gestapo and a number of other organizations ordered the transport of 500 boys from Kiecle. At that time, Paul was a young teenager who was no longer allowed to attend the private Jewish school in which he was enrolled. Wearing a jersey, shorts and sandals, Paul walked to the store to purchase medicine for his ill mother when he was apprehended by the German S.S. and pushed into a German military truck loaded with other boys. They were driven to the train station where they were then loaded on cattle cars and taken to Hrubsw, a small area near the Russian border.

There, the intention of the Germans was to have the Jewish boys convert the mud road into a highway which would allow the Germans easier access into Russia for the purpose of invasion. The working boys were closely guarded by Ukranian soldiers who were under German orders. At night, the boys slept in a barn where many of them died of typhus, some of whom were lying next to Paul.

Since the Germans supplied the Jews with the minimal amount of provisions, the conditions at Hrubsw were horrifying. Each morning, the boys were given one small piece of cold bread and a cup of black coffee "which was dirt". The boys were given just enough food to live a limited amount of time, since most were destined to die regardless of their food intake. Sanitation was non-existent: Paul vividly remembers how he and others used blankets that looked as though they had been painted



because of the "millions" of lice that were infested in the material. Those Jews who survived the conditions were often beaten or whipped with wet tree roots. Paul wished he were an animal, because they were treated better than the Jews.

He remained at Hrubswu for four months when he was released with the aid of his brother's non-Jewish girlfriend. She successfully bribed a guard with some valuable jewellery and freed Paul. He took the train to Kielec alone to ensure the woman's safety and soon reached his hometown. His fluent Polish was a great asset because his Jewish accent was not noticeable. Upon his arrival, he was told that he was the only boy, out of the 500 taken, who had returned to Kielec. Many crying parents came to him and asked him about the welfare of their sons.

Paul was informed that his other brother was among the group of 500 boys taken from Kielec. Paul's mother was extremely distraught because she knew that with her son's weakness and fragility, he would not be able to survive the horrendous conditions with which he was faced. As a result, Paul's uncle, who was a member of a Jewish committee, arranged to have Paul's brother taken out from a Kielec jail in exchange for Paul to go there.

He remained in the jail for a short time until he cleverly managed to escape by falling behind a supervised line in the forest and hiding behind a tree until the group was out of his visibility. Paul then questioned a passing Pole concerning the whereabouts of the train station and boarded the train for home. When he arrived in Kielec, his mother was shocked at his return.

In 1942, Kielec was liquidated of its Jews; they were pushed into the ghetto that had been formed by the Germans. The Boguchwals were put in a one-room store in which the conditions were horrendous. Because Paul's mother became very ill, he risked his life by walking one and one half miles to the Aryan side of Kielec to "take some potatoes for his mother and the rest of his family." He said "I wouldn't call it stealing, I was taking them to survive." Because Paul was weak from malnutrition, the potatoes were heavy and difficult for Paul to carry. By leaving the ghetto at night, sliding under barbed wire, removing the yellow star





which identified him as a Jew, he succeeded in his attempts to help his family a number of times. One night however, Paul was caught by the Jewish police.

According to Mr. Bogart, this was a group of men who, prior to the war, had been financially successful. When the war began they felt that they could not tolerate the poor conditions in which all Jews were forced to endure. Consequently, some joined the Jewish police, who (under the German S.S.) were able to avoid the Jews' daily hardships. Although they knew Paul and his family, they nearly killed him by smashing his head against a chair. "They were like the Germans."

Paul and his family were in the ghetto for almost one year when the Germans ordered its liquidation. On a September morning, the ghetto members heard loud shots coming from the machine guns of the German S.S. and the Polish police. They were in the process of gathering the Jews together to take them from Kielec. The S.S. and Polish police shot those individuals who were unable to walk quickly. Paul remembers witnessing the murder of an elderly rabbi carrying a Torah who was shot from top to bottom with a machine gun.

That same day, the S.S. stormed the Jewish hospital in the ghetto. They assembled the doctors and nurses and ordered them to immediately liquidate the entire hospital of its patients. The S.S. threatened that if the staff did not follow orders, they would be the first to be apprehended and then the S.S. would inject the patients with poison. The S.S. began on the top floor of the hospital whereupon the patients desperately ran to the floors below. Infants and small children were thrown to the ground from three to four storeys above. By some miracle, if any child survived, the S.S. grabbed his/her legs and smashed the child against the wheels of a military truck.

The liquidation of the ghetto resulted in the deaths of 1400 people within the first few days of September. The surviving Jews had no knowledge that their destination was to be the crematorium. The Germans led the Jews to believe that they were being "resettled" and given new jobs, which explained why no one resisted.



The Jews did not know that they were being lured to their deaths, as the Germans' at this time were extremely secretive.

Out of the 26,000 Jews of Kiele, the Germans needed 1500 people to work. The S.S. grabbed 1500 males, among them were Paul and his brother. Paul's desperate desire to remain with his parents was such that he began to put up much resistance to the S.S. officers. As punishment, they hit him over the head with the butt of their guns as he heard the frightened screams of his mother. Then, she and the remaining 24,500 Jews were taken to the trains destined for the Treblinka death camp; "The whole thing was like a very bad dream - no one came out of Treblinka."

That day, Paul and the others were taken to barracks located in the ghetto. The next morning, Paul and another boy left their barracks and walked outside to discuss the unfortunate events of the recent past. The boys were then approached by a S.S. officer "built like a giant", who assumed that the boys were in the process of trying to escape from the ghetto. After Paul boldly retorted that there was no where for him to escape, he and his friend were led by the officer to the police station. When they reached the station, Paul's friend was trembling, so Paul volunteered to refute the officer's accusation. The police proceeded to hit Paul on the head with a long cane and then ordered that him and the boy be shot. They were taken from the police station and led toward the grave site where Paul strategically positioned himself to give his friend an opportunity to run the other way. The boy was so disoriented that he headed toward the direction of the grave site and was then shot. During this time, Paul had time to escape from the officer and ran to a house where he hid behind a door. When the Germans arrived at the house they began searching all of the rooms. Paul took this opportunity to hid in the cellar by crawling through a door which was situated on the floor. When the Germans left the house, Paul knew that the officer from whom he had escaped would soon return. Approximately two hours later the officer entered the house alone because according



to Paul, he wanted no one to know that he had been outsmarted by a Jew. Paul was not discovered - he hid in the cellar eating raw potatoes and borscht which had been stored there.

Paul remained in the cellar for three days because he was unable to walk on a swollen foot which he obtained from a kick from the S.S. officer. During the night, he heard the sound of firing machine guns. Paul then left the house. Upon hearing the shots he envisioned the killings of the 1500 males in the ghetto. He then crawled back to the ghetto barracks and arrived to find no one. He slowly proceeded to a small house where he "figured this was going to be the end" and stayed there for two days. During this time, Paul heard voices uttering Jewish names. For a moment, he believed that he was hallucinating until he met up with some Jewish boys. The boys had returned to the ghetto under German orders to gather the remainder of the Jews' clothing in order that they could be sent to Germany. He used the opportunity to change his clothes so that he would not be as readily identifiable should the S.S. officer see him. He then joined the group of boys, some of whom were overwhelmed to see him still alive. Unknowing of their future, the boys were sent to a concentration camp in Kiecle called Hasag where they worked in an ammunition factory with Jewish people from the surrounding towns.

One morning, in the middle of 1943, a Jewish Capo named Rosenberg, who rendered his services to the Germans, announced that Paul, along with 150 others were to leave for another camp. His brother had not been selected to leave for the new camp and Paul begged Rosenberg not to separate him and his brother. Rosenberg promised that he would keep the brothers together however, his promise was not kept. Paul felt the pangs of a double tragedy because he was forced to leave his weaker brother and he was sent to a new camp where one never knew what to expect. Paul and the others were loaded on trucks destined for the train station. They were then put in cattle cars and taken to Buchenwald, a camp located in Germany.



In Buchenwald, the Jews experienced agony, hardship and great uncertainty. "You only hoped to survive from day to day. You didn't pray to live for a week, month or year because you were then hoping for too much...you just lived for a daily small little dream, so small it was unbelievable. If you hoped for more it was a joke."

After nine months, Paul was sent to a camp in Nedrosel, a small village in Germany where he built parts for aircrafts. He then worked as an apprentice watchmaker in a shop with an old family friend who was able to take him out of the hard labour and cold temperatures of the factory. After two months, the watchmaker was taken away by the Germans and Paul was left alone having a minimal amount of knowledge about fixing watches. Shortly after, the S.S. brought a watch to Paul for him to fix , threatening that if he did not repair it properly, he would be shot. He fixed the watch with what he believed to be his intense faith in G-d and was rewarded for his good work with two cigarettes from the officer.

Paul eventually escaped from the camp with the help of a German mechanic who had saved 14 Jews by giving them access to his barn.

In April, 1945, the Americans arrived in Nedrosal and Paul and the others were finally liberated. Following his liberation, Paul did not want to remain in Germany nor go to Poland because he was not concerned with obtaining any restitution. He felt he did not need to be reminded of the Holocaust and was perfectly satisfied with living on his own earnings. Instead, he stopped near Brussels, Belgium with the intention of travelling to Paris. A man who recognized Paul's striped work-camp uniform informed him that there were no provisions for Jews in Paris and Belgium accomodated Jewish war victims. The man arranged for a bus to be sent to the outskirts of Brüssels to pick up Paul and other Jews located there and take them to Brussels where they would be warmly received by the government as well as by the Jewish community. The Jews were given job opportunites, spending money, clothing, streetcar passes and other necessities for an entire year. Paul

Cont'd...





lived in Brussels for five years where he changed his surname to Bogart and became well established in the jewellery business.

In March, 1949, he decided to leave Brussels because "in Europe you have that danger of another war", and with the sponsorship of his aunt, he arrived in Hamilton, Ontario. Three years later, Paul married Micki Bornstein, raised two children and opened a very successful jewellery business.

Paul Bogart believes that the surviving victims of the Holocaust should have had their experiences exposed a short time following the war. He was eager to tell his story over 30 years ago and therefore feels that the recent public awareness of the tragedy is long overdue.



DAVID SCHOENBERG  
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David Schoenberg's sentiment concerning the Holocaust is one that is echoed by all survivors - "I pray it shouldn't happen again." He states that his hope during the war was to survive this traumatic ordeal and recalls that "Nobody knew if we would get out of it." Mr. Schoenberg withstood the obstacles and lived to relay his story.

David Schoenberg was born on October 23, 1918, in Chrzanow, Poland. The town included many small, private businesses most of which were tailor shops. The population of Chrzanow was 20,000, 10,000 of whom were Jewish. He lived with his parents, older brother and two younger sisters.

David worked in his father's fruit store until 1939 when the formation of the Jewish ghettos took place. He and his family were forced to vacate their home and were taken to the ghetto, whereupon they were ordered to work in the surrounding fields.

In November, 1940, David was sent out of the ghetto. Mr. Schoenberg recalls his fierce resistance to leave his family and it was this reluctance that resulted in a beating by the S.S. He was then taken to a forced labour camp called Sakrau, in Upper Silesia, Germany. According to David, there were approximately 300 people in the camp who were required to construct a highway with the use of picks and shovels. The conditions at Sakrau were fair. The food which the workers were given consisted to soup and a small piece of bread with some margarine. They were given no work clothes so were compelled to wear their own, but fortunately, were able to wash them with the laundry facilities that were available.

David spent six weeks at Sakrau before being transported by train to Gruneheide, which was another forced labour camp in Germany. The camp contained about 400 people whose work was similar to that of Sakrau. At Gruneheide, the Jews were allowed to receive letters from the ghetto. But in the event that the letters should be discovered by the S.S., ghetto members censored their letters, omitting any negative statements concerning their predicament. David received such letters from his family and remembers "reading between the lines" in an attempt to discover the true conditions in which his family



was living. David remained at this camp for 16 months, after which it was closed.

His next destination was Parzymiechy, a state farm near Wielun, Poland, which was an area annexed by Germany. There were approximately 400 people on the farm who, for seven days a week, "did any kind of work they forced us to do." There were some women at the camp who worked in the kitchen preparing the meals which consisted of soup and bread. The conditions at Parzymiechy were worse than those David had experienced in the German camps. There were no washing facilities and 50 men shared one room, with two men in each bunk. The men were uncertain of their future. They "lived from minute to minute not knowing what the next hour would bring."

In October, 1944, David was transferred to a branch of Gross-Rosen, a concentration camp in Silesia, near Breslau, Germany. He estimates that there were between 4000 and 5000 men and women many of whom worked with him in an aircraft parts factory. There, the Jews wore striped uniforms stamped with an identification number and ate small portions of soup and bread. David believes that "about 10 to 20 deaths occurred at the camp everyday from hard work and malnutrition."

The awaited day finally arrived, when, on May 8, 1945, David and the rest of the Jews at Gross-Rosen were liberated by the Soviet army. David recalls that at this time "I had mixed feelings. Suddenly, you were a free man and you didn't know where to go". Like most survivors, David decided to return home. He hitch-hiked, took the train, and travelled by any other means that was available to him. When he reached Chrzanow in the middle of May, he found that his younger sister had returned. David estimates that only a few hundred Jews returned to Chrzanow: "Everybody was hoping (that more would come back) but you had to face reality." He waited for more family members to return; however, the wait was futile, since no others came back. David soon left Chrzanow because it was in the process of becoming Russian territory.

In late 1946, David travelled to Bergen-Belson, Germany, since it was under British zone. As a result of this, he was able to immigrate to New York City in October 1949 to be with his sister who had arrived there previously. There he obtained work



in a factory making custom jewellery. In the course of his job, he was transferred in 1955 to Hamilton, Ontario where a branch of the New York jewellery factory was located.

Since David was alone, he often travelled to New York to visit his sister. There he met Anna Brandeis, a women from Paris, France who, during the Holocaust, had gone into hiding. David and Anna were married in New York in 1956 and settled in Hamilton where they raised a daughter and a son.

During his ordeal, Mr. Schoenberg "lived with hope in order to have the power to live." It was with this attitude that he was able to survive and tell his children of this experiences.





JACK ROSEN  
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As a youngster, Jack Rosen was not immediately aware of the political turmoil occurring in Europe. He was soon enlightened when subjected to the horrors of the Holocaust. His strong determination to live helped him to survive despite his young age.

Jack Rosen was born on November 28, 1930 in Siacob, Romania, a village in the province of Transsylvania. He was the eldest child in his family. He had one younger brother and a sister who died at birth. When Jack was a young boy he attended day school in Dej, a nearby city in Transsylvania. Transsylvania was both an agricultural as well as industrial city and was located outside of Siacob. He returned to Siecle after each week to spend Shabot at home with his family.

In 1938, the Germans proved their power in the area when they authorized Hungary to take over Dej. In the following year, Jewish homes and businesses in Siacob were vandalized by Saxons, non-Jews who sided with Hitler and identified themselves with the Germans. They broke windows and painted swastikas and anti-Semitic signs on the buildings owned by Jews. That same year the Hungarian government, under Nazi orders, announced that Jews were spies and traitors and that no one should do business with them. Jack's father owned a general store and his business, as well as all the Jewish businesses in the area, were closed down permanently by the Hungarians.

In 1941 all Jews in Siacob were ordered to wear a yellow star on the outside of their clothing. This clearly identified them as Jews. By 1943, only two Jewish families lived in Siacob. In an attempt to avoid the worsening situation for the Jews the remainder of the families fled the area. The Germans destined for Russia, travelled by train through Siacob. Thus, the Jews were not able to use the train in case the Germans identified the Jews' yellow star. Because Jack's father's business was closed down, Jack felt responsible for financially supporting his family so he bravely took the train or drove his horse and wagon



to the centre of the city and earned a living for his family. In doing so, he courageously hid his yellow star from the threatening eyes of the Germans.

Early in 1943, the deporation of the Jews in the area began. They were told to take with them only what they were able to carry and under Hungarian supervision were forced to walk from Siacob to Dej. As they passed nearby communities on the way more Jews were added to the group.

A few weeks after their departure, the Jews reached a fenced in concentration camp located in a wooded area near Dej. Jack experienced his first sight of the Germans where he and his family as well as other Jews were taken to a work camp within the concentration camp. They remained there for two to three months where they were given very little food; consequently they ate what they found.

In March, 1944, the Jews were loaded on boxcars and transported to Auschwitz. There the Germans selected the Jews who were useful enough to keep alive and killed those who were not. At this time, Jack and his family were separated. Without family, Jack felt lonesome and lost. He was soon befriended however, by three brothers whom he knew from school, who deeply sympathized with his predicament.

Jack and the brothers were put with approximately 100 - 200 young men. They were forced to line-up from early morning until the middle of the afternoon, at which time they were given a slice of bread and Kohlrabi soup to last the entire day.

Jobs were then assigned to the young men. The three brothers grabbed Jack from the line in an effort to have them all work together. They were given the task of clearing the dead people and their belongings from the trains entering Auschwitz. Although the job was morbid, Jack felt grateful to the brothers for easing his intense loneliness.

For two to three weeks, Jack and the brothers performed their task which exposed them to the horrifying situation in the crematorium. On Jack's second day on the job, a Pole informed him that by pointing to the crematorium, he would be pointing to his parents. Jack wanted to be strong, for his desire to live was great; however, upon passing the crematorium, he was fearful that he would be the



next to be killed there.

After two months, Jack was separated from the brothers and transferred by train to Buchenwald where the Germans needed Jews to work to replace Germans who were needed at the front. There, his job consisted of, one day, moving stones from the bottom of the quarry to the top and the next day carrying them from the top to the bottom. This lasted everyday for two months.

From Buchenwald, Jack was taken to Rainsdorf, Germany located 80 kilometres from Leipzig. He felt extremely lonely, for the common attitude in the camp was "each man for himself". The men were given one piece of bread a day and scrounged for any crumbs that might have fallen on the ground. A German officer who had been a Saxon in Jack's hometown brought him some extra food.

Because Rainsdorf was bombed by the Americans just prior to Jack's arrival, he was assigned the job of cleaning the factory located there. He worked in the gas refineries where he was ordered to clean out the gas tanks. The night before all the equipment was ready for operation, the Americans bombed the factory once again, consequently, Jack believes that there was a spy working in the factory informing the Americans of the most advantageous time to bomb.

As Leipzig was in the process of becoming Russian controlled, the Germans moved the Jews from Rainsdorf in late April, 1945 and loaded them on a train destined for Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia. A Russian plane passed over the morning train and dropped a bomb, whereupon the train's engine exploded. When the train stopped, approximately 1200 Jews were led into the woods by the Germans. Mr. Rosen calls this walk the "death march" for about 1100 Jews were shot for "lagging behind" the group. The 100 individuals remaining slept a few hours in barns and days later arrived in Theresienstadt. It was a concentration camp primarily for children and young adults, where he met up with two surviving brothers of the three who had befriended him at Auschwitz. The young men were given small amounts of food so Jack felt grateful for finding rotten potatoe peels. He washed and boiled them



and gave some to the brothers to whom he felt so indebted to help, as they were ill.

In May 1945, the Jews in Theresienstadt were liberated by the Russians. Jack was wearing the same striped uniform numbered 58959 since his first stay in a camp.

After Jack's liberation his first glimpse of freedom was that of a young Russian bicycle rider with a gun hanging from his neck. He and Jack saw each other after which the Russian cleverly noticed an elderly couple on the street who were disguised as civilians. He ordered them to remove their street clothes whereupon he saw swastikas tattooed on their skin. He demanded the Germans to lay on the ground and then handed his gun to Jack so that he would have the opportunity to kill them. Jack remembers feeling that "I was a human being, not a judge and jury". The Russian was angry with Jack's refusal to obey him, so he retrieved the gun and threatened to shoot Jack in the head. The Russian changed the direction of his gun and aimed it at the defenseless Germans. Locking eyes with Jack, one of the Germans begged him for forgiveness whereupon both Germans were instantly killed by the Russian. The whole incident happened in a matter of seconds but left a lasting emotional impact on Jack.

Jack returned to Siacob, Romania but soon left because his hometown "looked like a cemetery". In 1946 he travelled to a displaced persons camp in Austria just outside of Linz. He remained there for one year, after which he returned home and found only one uncle who had come back. Jack then travelled back to Austria where he registered for relocation in either Israel or Canada. He wished to live in the United States; however, the convoy destined there was full. Jack chose Canada over Israel as his second alternative because the Canadian convoy was ready to leave prior to that of the departure for Israel.





In February 1948, Jack arrived in Canada with the help of the Jewish Aid for Refugees. He settled in Hamilton, Ontario because it was the closest location to the United States where his uncle had moved previously. In 1960, Jack married Hilda Silverberg in Hamilton, where they raised their two children.

As Mr. Rosen looks at World War II in retrospect, he sees a young, healthy boy taken from school and forced to learn about the harsh realities of the Holocaust. "In school one learns of history and geography. My school was Auschwitz where I learned of man's inhumanity to man."



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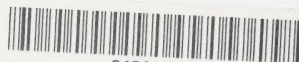
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